



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

AGENDA DATE: June 23, 2009

TO: Mayor and Councilmembers

FROM: Planning Division, Community Development Department

SUBJECT: South Coast 101 High Occupancy Vehicle Lane Project

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council receive a presentation from the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments and Caltrans regarding the South Coast 101 High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Project.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The South Coast 101 HOV project involves the addition of a new high occupancy vehicle lane in each direction of Highway 101 between Bailard Avenue in the City of Carpinteria and the Sycamore Creek bridge. The additional lanes are expected to operate as HOV lanes during peak periods on weekdays and as general-purpose lanes during weekday off-peak periods and on weekends. The City's project jurisdiction extends from Sycamore Creek to Olive Mill Road. City Local Coastal Development Permit and Design Review approvals would be required. Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG) and Caltrans are making presentations to various organizations and agencies to introduce the 101 HOV project and its environmental process. This report provides a brief history of Highway 101 widening efforts and information regarding staff's involvement in the current effort.

101 WIDENING HISTORY:

Consideration for widening Highway 101 between the Ventura County line and Goleta began in the early 1960s. By the late 1980s, more than \$85 million was programmed for widening Highway 101 south of Milpas Street. In 1993, Caltrans released a draft environmental document for a project proposing to add one lane in each direction between the Santa Barbara/Ventura County line and Milpas Street. That project received substantial community opposition that ended further development of the programmed project to widen the highway.

A series of studies sponsored by SBCAG followed, including the *Highway 101 Alternatives Study* (1995) and *The South Coast Highway 101 Deficiency Plan* (2002), assessed options for relieving congestion in the corridor without the need for freeway

widening. The *101 Deficiency Plan* identified problems on the highway and proposed both short and long-term strategies aimed at improving transit. In response to the *101 Deficiency Plan* findings, SBCAG and local cities adopted 34 short-term projects aimed at correcting operational deficiencies on Highway 101 and adjacent roads. The *101 Deficiency Plan* concluded that the identified improvements did not address long-term freeway congestion, and that further action on a community-wide basis would be required to alleviate increases in traffic volumes and ensuing decrease in level of service along the corridor.

The *101 Deficiency Plan* required development of an implementation plan for the adopted projects. The implementation plan began in 2004 and was eventually called *101 in Motion*. The goal of *101 in Motion* was to bring the communities together to agree on a longer-term (20- to 40-year) plan that addressed congestion along the 101 corridor. *101 in Motion*, which involved staff participation from area cities, Santa Barbara County and the Metropolitan Transit District, along with local decision makers and members of the public, evaluated a wide range of improvement approaches and strategies based on numerous quantitative and qualitative criteria. The consensus recommendation for implementation arising out of the *101 in Motion* process included a number of strategies, but the primary recommendation was “add a lane and a train” to address commuter and goods movement needs between the Ventura County line and the City of Santa Barbara. The recommendation specifically included the added lane as an HOV lane. The *101 in Motion* consensus recommendation was unanimously approved in October 2005 by the SBCAG Board.

An opportunity to fund a segment of the “add a lane” portion of the *101 in Motion* recommendation came as a result of the passage of Proposition 1B by California voters in 2006, which provided funding for improvements to key transportation corridors. With the passage of Proposition 1B, Caltrans Districts 5 and 7, with SBCAG and the Ventura County Transportation Commission, joined efforts to seek funding for an HOV lane addition/facility-widening project that extended from Mussel Shoals (Ventura County) to Carpinteria Creek. Proposition 1B also provided a one-time augmentation in state gas tax dollars, from which SBCAG programmed environmental phase funding for the South Coast 101 HOV project. These two projects, in conjunction with Milpas to Hot Springs Improvement project and the Linden & Casitas Pass Interchanges project, would provide a continuous six-lane segment on Highway 101 from the City of Ventura to Fairview Avenue in the City of Goleta. A graphic illustrating these four Highway 101 corridor projects is provided as Attachment 1. According to *101 in Motion*, this combination of projects is expected to significantly reduce existing and forecasted congestion and delay in the corridor particularly during the peak traffic hours.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW AND CITY PARTICIPATION:

Caltrans is the Lead Agency for California Environmental Quality Act /National Environmental Policy Act (CEQA/NEPA) review and will prepare an Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment for the project. Caltrans will hold public scoping meetings on July 7 (Canalino School in Carpinteria) and July 8 (Montecito

Country Club) from 5:30-8:00 pm to solicit public comment on scoping issues for environmental review.

Caltrans is initially proposing to evaluate four project alternatives in the environmental document: a no-build alternative and three build alternatives. All three build alternatives propose to add one HOV lane in each direction while minimizing the need for private right-of-way acquisition, resulting in a six-lane freeway within the project limits. Each of the build alternatives would include design variations for auxiliary lane placement and design modifications for the Hot Springs/Cabrillo interchange. Alternative One proposes to add HOV lanes while balancing impacts to landscaping between the outside shoulder and median planters. Alternative Two proposes to add HOV lanes while maximizing the amount of median planting. Alternative Three proposes to add HOV lanes within the existing median with incidental outside widening.

Caltrans identified the following potential project effects, which may impact environmental resources: impacts to visual resources; impacts to historic resources; increased noise levels; impacts to biological resources, including tidewater goby, steelhead trout, and riparian and wetland habitat impacts; temporary construction impacts to residents; and effects on traffic circulation.

The project is spread over three local jurisdictions including the Cities of Santa Barbara, Carpinteria, and the County of Santa Barbara. A Coastal Development Permit for the project would be required from each local jurisdiction. A multi-agency Project Development Team (PDT), which includes City staff, has been meeting since February 2008 to initiate and coordinate environmental and traffic studies and to begin addressing design issues. As members of the PDT, City staff reviews the project and environmental review documents against City environmental standards, policies, including the *Local Coastal Plan* and *Circulation Element*, and policy implementing documents, including the *City's Highway 101 Santa Barbara Coastal Parkway Design Guidelines* and the *Pedestrian Master Plan*. City staff also provides information regarding local procedures and requirements for application processing. Staff involvement at this stage is consistent with the *101 Santa Barbara Coastal Parkway Design Guidelines*, which recommends that Caltrans consult with staff during the definition of the project purpose and scoping activities prior to development of conceptual drawings.

PROJECT TIMELINE:

According to the attached schedule (Attachment 2), Caltrans expects to solicit local design and project input from the Architectural Board of Review and the Planning Commission between summer 2009 and spring 2011. The draft environmental review document would be completed and available for public review sometime between spring 2011 and winter 2012. Project environmental review would be completed in 2012 and Caltrans would submit a local Coastal Development Permit application between spring 2012 and spring 2013.

The Planning Commission and Transportation and Circulation Committee are scheduled to hear an update on the project at a joint meeting on June 11, 2009. A brief summary of the input received from that meeting will be presented by staff to City Council at the June 23rd meeting.

ATTACHMENTS: 1. Highway 101 Corridor Projects
 2. South Coast 101 HOV Fact Sheet/Schedule

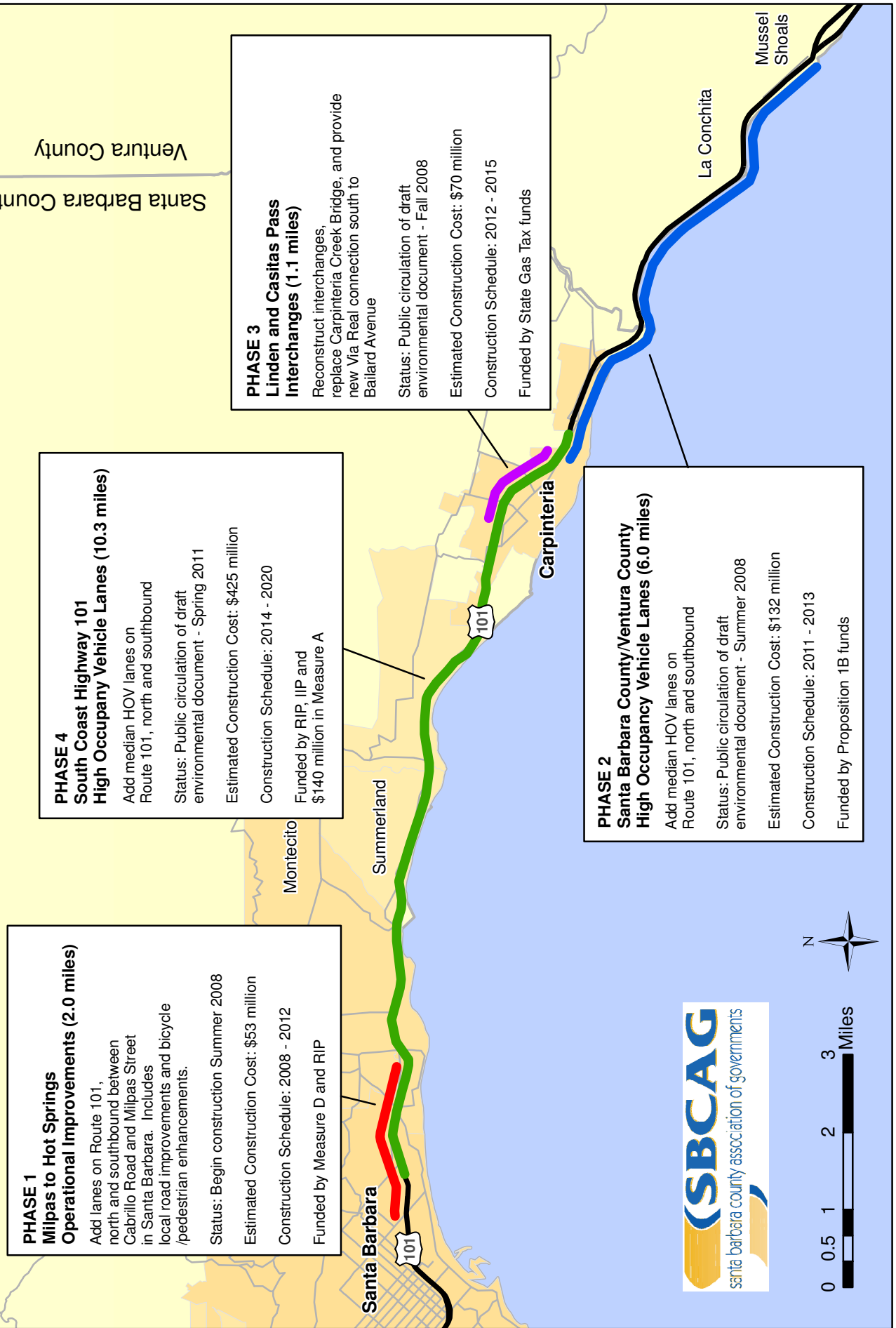
PREPARED BY: Daniel Gullett, Associate Planner

SUBMITTED BY: Paul Casey, Community Development Director

APPROVED BY: City Administrator's Office

Route 101 Corridor Projects

Mussel Shoals to the City of Santa Barbara





April 2009

Public Involvement

For many years a wide range of stakeholders with varying interests along this corridor have consistently expressed a strong desire to be involved in the planning, design and decision-making associated with improvements to Highway 101. SBCAG, Caltrans, the County of Santa Barbara and the cities of Santa Barbara and Carpinteria are embarking on a stakeholder involvement process that aims to educate and engage a range of stakeholders along the corridor as part of the South Coast HOV Project.

Caltrans District 5 is the lead agency for the project. SBCAG is the primary project sponsor. Project partners include the City of Santa Barbara, County of Santa Barbara, City of Carpinteria, SBCAG and Caltrans.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the South Coast HOV Lanes project is to reduce congestion and delay, provide capacity for future travel demand, encourage modal shift to transit and carpooling, and improve travel time on U.S. 101 within the project limits. This project will facilitate the flow of goods and services through the corridor and minimize diversion of freeway trips onto the local road system.

This project was initiated to implement one of the key elements from the *101 In Motion* consensus recommended package of projects; namely, an HOV lane on Route 101 from Milpas south to the county line. This proposed project is one of six elements that are being implemented through *101 In Motion*. Together this package will implement a multi-modal strategy to accommodate future travel demand while facilitating a modal shift to carpooling, transit, and passenger rail. Other consensus recommended *101 In Motion* elements include:

- New commuter friendly passenger rail service
- Facilitation of transit and carpool use
- Demand Management strategies
- Improved operations and transportation communications, and
- Phased improvements north of Milpas Street

Why is the Project Needed?

Traffic volume is overwhelming the existing capacity of the U.S. 101 during weekday and weekend peak periods. Route 101 within the project limits typically operates with congested flow (Level of Service F) conditions during weekday and weekend peak periods. These conditions typically occur for one to four hours daily in each direction and result in significant travel delay.

Without capacity improvements, LOS F conditions are forecast to exceed ten hours a day in each direction by 2030. The expected rise in traffic volumes, congestion, and delay is a result of several factors, including increased long distance commuting from Ventura County, internal population growth, and interregional traffic growth, including goods movement.



Guiding Principles

- Project design is to be compatible with existing community character while addressing user and maintenance worker safety.
- Visual and coastal resources are to be preserved and/or mitigated to the greatest extent feasible.
- Adverse impacts to historical and cultural resources are to be avoided or mitigated to the greatest extent feasible.
- Acquisition of private property is to be minimized.
- Financial viability is a key constraint; alternatives under consideration should be feasible within the anticipated long term funding stream for the project.
- Opportunities for stakeholder and public input and involvement will be provided throughout the project development process.

Background

A two-year corridor study that examined all modes and involved extensive community outreach was completed by SBCAG in July 2006. This study, called *101 In Motion*, developed a vision for long-term mobility along the Route 101 corridor. The study resulted in a consensus recommendation for six elements that, together, will implement a multi-modal strategy to accommodate future travel demand while facilitating a modal shift to carpooling, transit, and passenger rail.

Without implementation of the elements, *101 In Motion* forecast that that LOS F conditions would exceed ten hours a day in each direction by 2030. Adding an HOV lane between the Ventura County and Milpas Street was one of these elements. Other consensus recommended elements in *101 In Motion* include:

- New commuter friendly passenger rail service
- Facilitation of transit and carpool use
- Demand Management strategies
- Improved operations and transportation communications, and
- Phased improvements north of Milpas Street

Each of these elements includes one or more individual projects. Separate implementation efforts for rail improvement are ongoing; agencies involved with implantation include SBCAG, Caltrans Division of Rail, AMTRAK, and Union Pacific Railroad.



Preliminary Design, Environmental Review & Permitting Schedule

Phase I: Pre-Scoping (Fall 2008 – Summer 2009)

- Engage local stakeholders regarding the project guiding principles and history
- Explain the project's context in the larger corridor and relation to other projects
- Introduce the integrated technical and stakeholder involvement approach
- Conduct an initial issues scan among key stakeholders to support a more efficient and streamlined environmental scoping process
- Identify stakeholders not yet aware of or involved in the project

Phase II: Environmental Scoping (Summer 2009 – Spring 2011)

- Meet CEQA/NEPA environmental scoping requirements for public involvement
- Receive local design input
- Present project information at concept review meetings for each of the local permitting agencies.
- Refine and/or confirm project scope
- Assess visual and aesthetic impacts and identify visual mitigation strategies

Phase III: Draft Environmental Review and Final EIR (Spring 2011 – Winter 2012)

- Meet CEQA and NEPA legal requirements for draft environmental document review and public involvement
- Select preferred alternative

Phase IV: Permitting and Design (Spring 2012 – Spring 2013)

- Engage Coastal Development Permitting (CDP) agencies in CDP application process
- Attend public hearings and present project information as needed
- Secure coastal development and other local permits